

gether and be together, because if we do, there is no stopping this country.”

I’ve said several times in the last few weeks—I’ll just close with this—it seems like my life as your President has been dominated by fire in the last couple of weeks, arguably for longer than that. But I mean, literally, on the one hand there’s the church fires, which are the symbol of everything that is wrong, that we want to reject when it occurs in our country. And on the other hand, there is the fire that burns in the Olympic flame that’s making its way to Atlanta.

And I’m sure every one of you has read as this flame has moved through your States of all these community heroes who are picked to carry the torch for a kilometer. Some of them were in wheelchairs and had to roll along; some of them were very old and had to walk along; some of them were great athletes and could fly along so fast the flame almost went out. But every one of them had one thing in common: They were picked to carry that torch because they were, first and foremost, great citizens.

There was a 74-year-old woman in Nevada that had taken 100 kids in who had been abandoned, so she took them in. There was a man who came in in Washington, one of the torchbearers at the White House, probably about 60, African-American man, who had devoted his life to rescuing the lives of children. And he walked up with 12 of his kids, and they were white, black, brown, and Asian-Americans. He had given his life to them.

There was a Catholic nun who had devoted her whole life to fulfilling the Catholic social ministry in her community. There was the deaf president of Galludet University, our Nation’s deaf university, who is in his late fifties. And when he left what he was doing with us, he was going that week to run a 100-mile race. There was a young woman who played basketball at the University of Tennessee whose body was crushed in an accident, and she thought her life was nearly over, her athletic career was certainly over. But by sheer force of will, she got herself back into shape, resumed her basketball career, helped them win a national championship, and is one of the leaders on our basketball team.

All of these people shared one thing in common—they’re all different races, all different religions, all different backgrounds—they lived their citizenship. They bridged the differences between us. They were looking for the future. They saw themselves in terms of who they were, not in terms of what they weren’t. In terms of what they could become, not who they were supposed to hate. In terms of what kind of partnerships and teamwork they could build, not how they could be divided.

That is the mission that the NAACP will carry, with great success and energy and commitment and conviction, to the hearts and minds of these young people into the 21st century. That is the mission we must be on. And that is what I hope and pray we will be discussing in this election season: How can we give to our children the kind of America they deserve to have.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:30 p.m. at the Charlotte Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Bishop William Graves, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Memphis, TN; Hazel Dukes, chair, planning committee, and J.R. Williams, organist, NAACP 87th convention; and Rev. Benjamin Hooks, former executive director, NAACP.

### **Remarks at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte July 10, 1996**

Thank you. Didn’t she do a good job? Let’s give her another hand. Tracy was great. Thank you. [*Applause*]

I’d like to thank Dr. Zeiss for hosting me here and for all the work that he does to give so many people an opportunity. I want to thank my good friend Congressman Mel Watt for the representation that he gives to you and for the service that he gives to our Nation.

I thank Harvey Gantt, who’s been my friend for a very long time, for joining me here today and for his commitment to the education of all Americans and the opportunity for all the citizens of the great State of North Carolina.

I want to thank all of you for making me feel welcome. I was greeted when I came here by Brian Johnson, the president of your student body, and I got to learn a little bit about the students who are here and this fine institution. I thank the mayor and the other local officials who are here and the educational officials from the State of North Carolina.

I am glad to be back in Charlotte. This is a little different experience. The last time I was here I got to do something Presidents don't get to do; I got to go to the Charlotte speedway and drive my own car, because there was a Mustang owners convention, and I am one. So I had a great time.

Today I want to talk about what puts all of you who are students here in the driver's seat for America's future. I think that this institution—and many people have talked about my abiding love affair with community colleges—but just look around you. Listen to Tracy's story. To me, the community college is the institution in America which most clearly reflects how we ought to be organized, how we ought to work together, and what we ought to be trying to do as we move this country into the 21st century.

You think about it. Compared to a lot of educational institutions, it's not very bureaucratic. It's flexible. The curriculum changes all the time, based upon the needs of the people and the changes in the economy. It's also a highly democratic—that's small "d"—institution. [*Laughter*] It's open to everyone. It also embodies the values that I think this country needs to work on as we move to the future; everybody can have an opportunity. They can't seize it unless they're responsible enough to take control of their own lives, just like Tracy did. And there's a real sense of community here.

You go to any community college in America—and I've been to some in which there was as many as 70 or 80 different ethnic groups represented in a single community college—and the sense of community comes out of people's shared values and reaches across their racial, their ethnic, and their religious differences, so that people are stronger by working together than they are by emphasizing their division.

That's what this whole country needs to do. This country would work better if it worked more like a giant community college. Indeed, one of the things that Vice President Gore and I have tried so hard to do is to make our Federal Government less bureaucratic, less rule-oriented, more goal-oriented, to give people opportunities but not guarantees, and to give you a better service at a lower cost. I would be remiss, since I'm here in Charlotte, if I didn't say that the best example of that may have been created by a native of Charlotte, Erskine Bowles, who is here with me today, who ran the Small Business Administration.

When I became President, somebody who wanted help from the Small Business Administration, no matter how little their business was, had to fill out a form that was an inch thick, and it took weeks to get an answer. Under Mr. Bowles' leadership we cut the form to a page; we cut the waiting time to a matter of a couple days; we cut the budget of the SBA and we doubled the loan volume of the SBA; and we increased the diversity of the loan volume, including more women and more minorities, and never lowered the standards for anybody. We just did it the way community colleges do it, giving everybody an opportunity in a nonbureaucratic, efficient, effective way.

I want to ask all of you just for a few minutes today to think about where we are in the history of this great country. We just celebrated our 220th birthday. We're 4 years away from a new century that begins a new millennium. We're going through a period of rapid change in our economy and the way we work, the very nature of the workplace. It's affecting how we live and how we raise our children and how we organize our families and communities.

And we have also gone through a great change in the way we relate to the rest of the world in terms of our opportunities and our crises. We have more economic opportunity than ever before because of the global economy. But because of the global economy, people who don't have the kind of educational opportunities that are offered here at the community college are likely to get left behind and not have a chance at those opportunities.

We don't have to worry about nuclear war as much as we once did. And I'm proud to say that for the first time since the atomic bomb was dropped 50 years ago, there's not a single nuclear weapon pointed at the children of the United States of America. I'm proud of that.

But as we learned in the heartbreaking loss of our men in uniform in Saudi Arabia, when the Federal building blew up in Oklahoma City, when we thwarted the plans that were laid in Arizona a few days ago for terrorism, we have new security threats that are the direct result of having more open borders, more easy access to information, a higher technology world. And what I want you to think about is, how are we going to make the most of the future? How are we going to meet our challenges and preserve our values? How are we going to reward work and family?

I believe more than I can say that America has a mission to get to the 21st century with the American dream alive for every person who's willing to work for it, with the American community coming together, not being more divided, bridging the gaps of race and religion and ethnicity and gender and region and even the incomes you start out with in life, to find common cause the way you do here.

And finally, maintaining the leadership of this country for peace and freedom and prosperity throughout the world. And I think the only way to do that is to reassert a basic bargain, opportunity in return for responsibility from all citizens and a strong sense of community in which every single person has a citizen's responsibility to make not only your families but your neighborhoods, your communities, and your country a stronger, more united place. That is how we will make the most of our future.

Our job in Washington is to give you the chance to make the most of your own lives, not to guarantee results. When I became President, we had a drifting economy, an exploding deficit, the slowest job growth since the Great Depression. I asked the Congress to adopt a plan to reduce the deficit, to dramatically expand trade, to give tax relief to the hardest pressed working families, to—even while we were cutting spending—invest

more in education, in research, in technology, in environmental protection in ways that would grow the economy.

I said I believe this will help our economy. I think it will cut the deficit in half and create 8 million new jobs. Well, 3½ years later, we know the results. Our deficit is going to be cut by more than half, and our people have now produced 10 million new jobs in 3½ years, 320,000 of them plus in North Carolina.

There was a mention about the minimum wage a minute ago. There has always been a debate about the minimum wage. Some people say if you raise it, it will cost jobs. Ninety percent of the studies say that if you raise it in a modest manner to keep up with inflation, it does not cost jobs.

Our economy—I just got back from a meeting of the great seven industrial powers of the world in France. Together, all of them together in 3½ years, have produced 10½ million jobs, a half a million in the other six countries and 10 million in America. We can afford to raise the minimum wage and give people a decent standard of living.

Last week I met a woman who was a student in a program like many you have here, in Chicago, at a festival there in which all the different eating establishments from all the different ethnic groups came out to the great Grant Park, overlooking Lake Michigan in Chicago. And I was going from booth to booth sampling the food. It was a hard job, but I had to do it. *[Laughter]* It's one of those things you just have to do when you're President. *[Laughter]*

But this young woman was—she said, “Mr. President, I appreciate the fact that you're trying to raise that minimum wage. I hear them talking about how the only people who make the minimum wage are teenagers who live at home and middle class families.” She said, “I'm a 28-year-old single mother of two. I work full time for the minimum wage, and I go to college at night, and I need it.”

I saw on television a few months ago a woman interviewed down in Virginia who worked in a factory. And they said to this lady—she was in her fifties—they said, “Well, they say you might lose your job if we raise the minimum wage.” And she

looked at the interviewer, and she said, "Honey, I'll take my chances." [Laughter]

So I say to you we've got to bring the benefits of this economy to everybody. But the real answer to doing that is to focus on creating the opportunity for people to continually improve themselves. And that's where education comes in. We all know that education has always been important for individuals. Today it's more important for individuals than ever before, and it is critical to the future of this country. We have to be able to move people into the work force with the skills they need and the ability they need to learn new skills throughout a lifetime. That is what I came here to say to you today.

And I have said to people for a long, long time now, it has been apparent at least—and I say, at least—6 years, since we saw the 1990 census, why there's increasing inequality in America, why, even when we grow jobs, inequality seems to increase. It's because too many people in the adult work force in the United States did not get a chance to go to a community college like this one and get skills that would give them a good job with a prospect of a growing income. That is a clear and overwhelming reason.

And so we have worked hard, not just to increase Head Start and to help schools lift their standards in K through 12, but to increase access to higher education. In our first 3½ years we redid the student loan program so that people could borrow the money in a way that was faster and less costly and young people borrowing money and schools that participate in our direct loan program could have at least four different options about how to repay the loans, including limiting your repayment to a certain percentage of your income so no one would ever be discouraged from borrowing money for fear that they would be bankrupt in trying to pay it back.

We increased the Pell grant program which I bet is popular. And I might say, I'm trying to increase it again. We passed AmeriCorps, as your president said, the national service program. And already 45,000 Americans have had a chance to earn some money to go to college by working in their community to help people solve problems at the grassroots level.

But I want to say to you that I do not believe that's enough. I don't think it's enough. I think we have to do more to raise the quality and the opportunities in the public school years. And the Vice President and I have made a personal commitment to see that every classroom and every library in every school in America is hooked up to the Internet by the end of this decade so that all children, no matter how poor they are, no matter whether they're in rural or urban districts, can access the same information that young people in the wealthiest school districts in America can. I believe in that.

But I also know that we have to find a way to get more adults to come back to community colleges and get skills so they can upgrade their own earnings prospects and strengthen their children's future. And we have to make available a college education to every person who wants to access it.

And I have made three proposals I want to reiterate here today because I think together they would revolutionize the prospects of ordinary Americans. The first thing I want to say is everybody who wants to go to college ought to be able to go. And I have proposed—I have proposed—that's assuming they do the work and deserve to stay. I have proposed giving every family a tax deduction of up to \$10,000 a year for the cost of college tuition for 4 years for graduate school or whatever.

But I believe the critical thing here—if you look at how our economy is structured, the critical thing is to make 2 years at a community college as universal an experience as graduation from high school is now. We need to put a 13th and 14th grade into the American psyche; every American should think that it's just as essential as getting a high school diploma. It ought to become second nature to every person.

And I have proposed also giving families a tax credit, refundable for people who don't owe that much tax, of \$1,500 a year for the first year of community college and a guaranteed \$1,500 credit for the second year for everyone who maintains a B average. That would open up community college to all Americans. That would cover the vast majority of tuition bills in all the community colleges in America. It would help us to ingrain

in people the notion that you can't quit after high school. Even if you have to go out and go to work, you ought to be going to your community college while you're working.

And the last thing I want to say is we need to do something for the folks in the work force who lose their jobs, who are dramatically underemployed. For years and years and years, your Government, I think, has hung on to a job training system that doesn't work. There are 70 different Federal job training programs. You need a slide rule and a computer and a place on the Internet to figure out whether you're qualified for one of these 70 programs. It breaks your head just thinking about it.

What I'd like to see us do is to get rid of all these programs, create a big pot of money, and give people a skill grant when they lose their job or if they're underemployed, worth about \$2,500 a year and say, you can spend up to 2,000 of this at a community college or getting an education and training; you can spend 500 searching for a new job. You decide how to spend it. The Government doesn't need a bureaucracy to tell you that the best place is a community college within driving distance of almost everybody in America.

And I want you to think about it. If we made it possible in America for every adult who is stuck in a difficult economic situation to go back to community college, if we said we will pay the tuition of every person who is starting in community college for up to 2 years, if we said, if you want to go to a 4-year school or to a graduate program we would give you a tax deduction for the cost of tuition, if we did those things, it wouldn't be long before we would see inequality diminishing, the American people growing together the way we did after World War II, because the single most important ingredient in opportunity for all responsible Americans is having access to an adequate education for the 21st century. That is a commitment I think we ought to make together.

And let me just say this as I close. I ask you to think about what you wanted your country to look like in the 21st century. I think about it in terms of what I want America to look like when my daughter is my age and has her own children. I believe this coun-

try can be greater than it is today. I believe our best days are ahead. I believe if we can find a way to deal with the security threats that face all civilized people around the world and our problems here at home and if we can create opportunity for everybody who is willing to be responsible and if we can come together across our differences in a stronger community, that the best days of this country are still ahead.

We can create opportunity for everybody who is responsible enough to work for it. We can build a stronger American community and revel in our diversity. We can maintain our leadership in the world. It all starts, however, with being committed to organize ourselves the way this community college is and being committed to giving every single American citizen the kind of opportunities that you celebrate here every day.

Keep up the good work; support it. This is not a partisan issue; it's America's future.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the Quadrangle. In his remarks, he referred to Tracy Tallent, graduate, and Tony Zeiss, president, Central Piedmont Community College; and Harvey Gantt, Democratic candidate, U.S. Senate.

### **Statement on Action To Eliminate Cigarette Vending Machines From A&P Stores**

*July 10, 1996*

Every year hundreds of millions of packs of cigarettes are bought by children and adolescents. In a 1995 survey, more than 90 percent of 10th graders said it was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain cigarettes. That is why my administration has proposed measures to reduce significantly the unlawful sale of tobacco products to young people.

I am pleased to commend the American business leaders who have also stepped up to the plate to tackle this problem. Today, Mr. James Wood, chairman and CEO of A&P, and the A&P board of directors have announced that they will remove all cigarette vending machines from their stores by the end of this month. In doing so, they have responded to the challenge and taken responsibility for a problem everyone—par-